

IN THE CLAIMS

Please substitute Claims 1, 9, 11, and 15 with the following amended claim and add Claims 46 through 75. Marked-up copies of the amended and new claims are included at the end of the amendment.

1. An on-line, interactive web site information system having one of more functions for displaying advertising, information and business listings and referring users such as shoppers or merchants to the web sites of merchants listed with respect to certain geographic locations such as town and cited, and certain categories, comprising:

means for substantially automated creation of said business listings and advertising by users of said system;

means for substantially automated selection by said merchants of said categories and said geographic locations wherein said advertising, information and/or business listings will appear so as to enable geographic targeting of said users of said system;

means for displaying said advertising, information and/or business listings for a duration of time;

means for viewing said advertising, information and/or business listings based on the selection by the user of at least one of said geographic locations and at least one of said categories in which the merchant advertisements, business listings and/or information is displayed;

means for linking said advertising, business listings and/or information to the web pages of others;

at least one-hyper link corresponding to a category to link users to the web site of at least one merchant;

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means for building databases from the information provided by users of the system;

means for recording and providing account review information to users of the system;

means for users to add and delete said information, business listings and advertisements for display on the system;

extended services means;

means for recording statistics about usage of the system; and,

marketing analysis means for monitoring activity among the various functions of the system.

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9. An on-line, interactive web site information system having one or more functions for displaying advertising, information and business listings and referring users such as shoppers or merchants to the web sites of merchants listed with respect to certain geographic locations such as towns and cities, and certain categories, comprising:

means for substantially automated creation of said business listings and advertising by users of said system;

means for substantially automated selection by said merchant of said categories and said geographic locations wherein said advertising, information and/or business listings will appear so as to enable geographic targeting of said users of said system;

means for displaying said advertising, information and/or business listings;

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means for viewing said advertising, information and/or business listings based on the selection by the user of at least one of said geographic locations and at least one of said categories in which the merchant advertisements, business listings and/or information is displayed;

means for linking said advertising, business listings and/or information to the web pages of others;

at least one-hyper link corresponding to a category to link users to the web site of at least one merchant;

means for building databases from the information provided by users of the system;

means for recording and providing account review information to users of the system;

means for users to add and delete said information, business listings and advertisements for display on the system;

means for selecting the towns and categories in which to display said advertising, business listings and information;

extended services means;

means for recording statistics about usage of the system;

marketing analysis means for monitoring activity among the various functions of the system;

means for generating revenue from said usage of said system comprising:

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- [a.] fees from merchants for listing their web sites in specific towns;
- [b.] fees from banner ads displayed in specific towns;
- [c.] fees from coupons made available in specific towns;
- [d.] fees from for sale listings displayed in specific towns; and
- [e.] fees from extended service; and

accounting means for keeping track of the revenue created by the system and any commissions owed to others.

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11. The invention according to Claim 9 wherein said for sale listings further include means to offer items for sale on a best offer basis.

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15. The invention according to Claim 14 wherein said means for indicating that there are no links to business web pages in a given category comprises an area having the appearance of a darkened button.

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46. An on-line, interactive web site information system for allowing information to be inputted by merchants and accessed by consumers based on geographic areas and topical categories, the system comprising:

a series of Internet web pages having information organized into a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the geographic areas include at least one geographic area of

large expanse and a plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse organized into a plurality of topical categories;

 a web server for displaying the series of Internet web pages;
 means for the merchants to input the information onto the series of Internet web pages, wherein the means for inputting the information comprises means for selecting the geographic areas and topical categories to list and/or display the information;

 means for the consumers to select at least one of the topical categories in at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse;

 means for displaying the information to the consumer based on the selected at least one of the topical categories in the at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse.

47. The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes business advertising.

48. The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes coupons.

49. The system of Claim 48, wherein the coupons are of limited duration.

50. The system of Claim 46 further comprising means for monitoring the usage of the system.

51. The system of Claim 50 which further comprises means for providing statistics regarding the usage of the system.

51. The system of Claim 50 which further comprises means for providing statistics regarding the usage of the system.

52. The system of Claim 51 which further comprises means for calculating fees based on the usage of the system.

53. The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means to limit access to the information.

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54. The system of Claim 53 wherein the limiting means comprises a password required to access the information.

55. The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes job postings.

56. The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for providing extended services.

57. The system of Claim 56 wherein the extended services include allowing commercial transactions.

58. The system of Claim 46 wherein the at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse area selected by town name.

59. The system of Claim 46 wherein the at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse are selected by zip code.

60. The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for the consumer to directly contact the merchant.

61. The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means to allow for commercial transactions between the merchant and the consumer.

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62. The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for the consumers to list items for sale, wherein the consumers select at least one topical category and at least one geographic area of smaller expanse in which to list the items.

63. The system of Claim 46 which further comprises hyperlinks to allow the consumers to access websites of the merchants.

64. A method for providing an on-line interactive web site for referring a consumer to one or more merchants comprising;

providing a series of web pages containing information organized into a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the hierarchy of geographic areas includes at least one geographic area of large expanse and a plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse organized into at least one topical category;

allowing the one or more merchants to select at least one of the geographic areas to list information pertaining to the one or more merchants;

allowing the one or more merchants to input information into the series of webpages;

connecting the consumer to the series of web pages;

prompting the consumer to select the at least one topical category from the at least one geographic area of smaller expanse from the hierarchy of geographic areas; and

displaying the merchant information in response to the geographic area and topical category inputted by the consumer.

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65. The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of monitoring the information that is accessed.

66. The method of Claim 65 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing statistics regarding the information accessed.

67. The method of Claim 65 wherein the method further comprises the step of calculating fees based on the information accessed.

68. The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing extended services.

69. The method of Claim 68 wherein the step of providing extended services comprises providing commercial transactions between the merchant and the consumer.

70. The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of prompting for a password to access the information.

71. The method of Claim 64 wherein the information includes at least one coupon.

72. The method of Claim 71 which further comprises the step of providing a set time period for the at least one coupons to be listed on at least one of the series of web pages, wherein the at least one coupon will automatically expire upon expiration of the set time period.

73. The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of generating revenue from the one or more merchants for listing the merchant information in the hierarchy of geographic areas and topical categories.

74. The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of providing means for the one or more merchants to update or edit the merchant information.

75. The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of providing means for the consumers to access websites of the one or more merchants.